A. M. Grimes: Country Teacher and Itinerant Minister

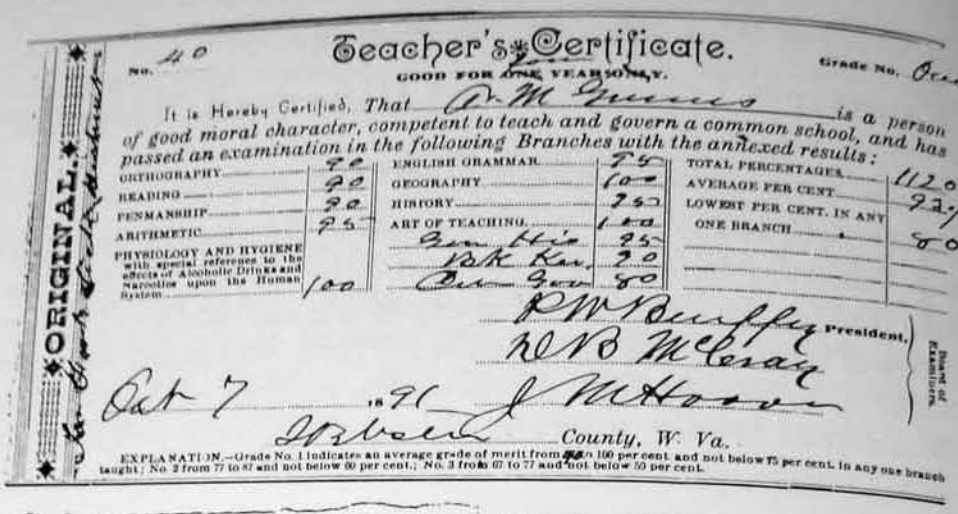
By Berlin B. Chapman

IN Appalachia, as in most of America, ministers of the gospel operating from villages exercised great influence on populace, but few kept full records of experience and service. They were doers of the word, seldom scribes of it. Those who pursue history of ministry in West Virginia always will be indebted to Rev. Addison McLaughlin Grimes, a typical Methodist Episcopal preacher who kept a minute record from 1895-1920.

Grimes was licensed to preach at Fairview Methodist Church in Webster County. He served fifteen charges. He listed dates, addresses, names and dates of those whose marriage service he performed. Of those whose funerals he held, he cited text of scripture used. He delivered sermons, recording for same the date, text, subject, place and remarks. Moreover, he continued the record after retirement, and on his 100th birthday delivered a sermon in Fairmont.

Grimes' record is a valuable case study. To know well how he operated at the turn of the twentieth century is to know much about services of his colleagues in related denominations. Hence it is not only important to study the ministerial record, but to know much about the man who kept it.

He was born in Webster County, July 4, 1863, an event coinciding with the fourth and final day of the Battle of Gettysburg. He attended rural schools in terms of about four months. On July 21, 1869, Rev. T. S. Coulter baptized Grimes by sprinkling. In 1882-84 he attended the seminary later known as West Virginia Wesleyan College. Always a student, he largely was self-educated. He believed that the secret of scholarship is serious and prolonged self-effort. By 1891 he held a teacher's certificate, "Grade No. One," the highest awarded by Webster County, based on written examination. He taught eight terms of school in the county, each term being four months. Beginning in 1888, he kept for several years careful account of earnings and expenditures.



ORIGINAL.

No. 40 **Teacher's Certificate.** Grade No. One

GOOD FOR ONE YEAR ONLY.

It is Hereby Certified, That A. M. Grimes is a person of good moral character, competent to teach and govern a common school, and has passed an examination in the following Branches with the annexed results:

ORTHOGRAPHY	90	ENGLISH GRAMMAR	95	TOTAL PERCENTAGES	1120
READING	90	GEOGRAPHY	100	AVERAGE PER CENT	92 1/3
PENMANSHIP	90	HISTORY	95	LOWEST PER CENT. IN ANY ONE BRANCH	80
ARITHMETIC	95	ART OF TEACHING	100		
PHYSIOLOGY AND HYGIENE with special reference to the effects of Alcoholic Drinks and Narcotics upon the Human System	100	Gen. His.	95		
		B.K. Kan.	90		
		Cen. Gov.	80		

R. W. Burffy President,
W. B. McCray
J. M. Hoover
Board of Examiners.

Oct 7 1891

Webster County, W. Va.

EXPLANATION.—Grade No. 1 indicates an average grade of merit from 90 to 100 per cent. and not below 75 per cent. in any one branch taught; No. 2 from 77 to 87 and not below 60 per cent.; No. 3 from 67 to 77 and not below 50 per cent.

Duplicate of this certificate filed in my office this 14th day Oct. 1891.
B. D. Hutchison
Secy. B.E.

For K. Lick Dist.

You are drawn as a Juror for Nov. Court Petit Juror.

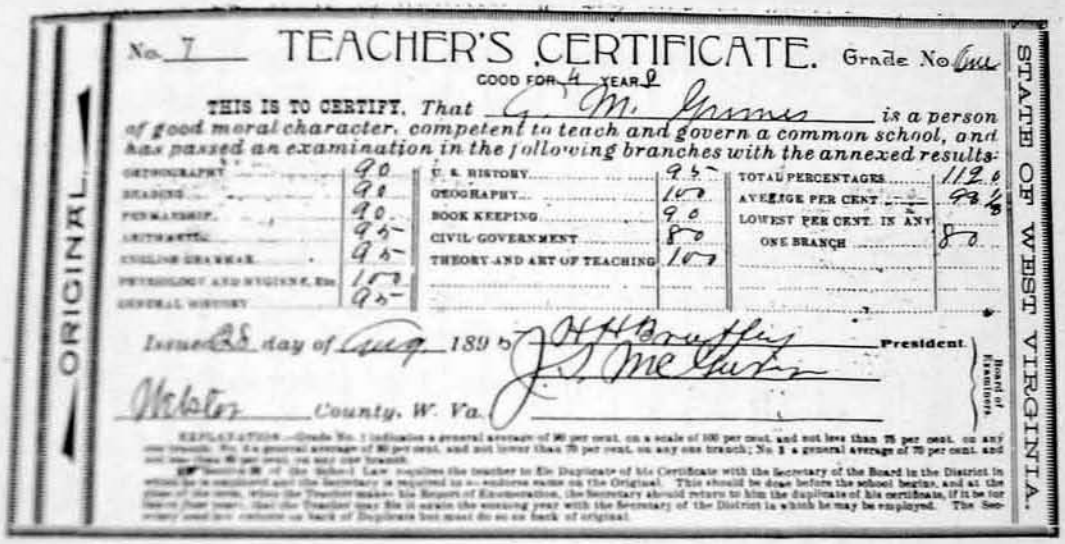
A. M. Grimes

The county seat of Webster is Webster Springs, officially known as Addison, and it was named for Addison McLaughlin. Grimes was named for this man. The first newspaper in the county was the "Mountain Echo." It appeared January 26, 1883, and consisted of eight pages 8 x 15 inches. In memoirs Grimes wrote: "I visited Addison the first time in March, 1883. To me it was wonderful to see Robert Townsend, Jr., with a step of his foot, print a page of the newspaper."

News media quoted Grimes: "I was gloriously converted on Abraham Lincoln's birthday, in 1884." Ten years later he was teaching school in the vicinity of Fairview Methodist Church, an institution of which he was a charter member. Dedication was September 9, 1894, and is described by Sampson N. Miller:

This was a great day for both old and young. It was the largest crowd ever to assemble at the church. People came from quite a distance in sleds, wagons, buggies, on horseback and many on foot. You talk about food, they certainly had it that day. Dedication was on one of the most beautiful autumn days I ever saw. Why the enthusiasm? Because the good people of the community had something to look forward to. No lad of ten would ever have forgotten that day.

In listing young men who went out from the church as ministers, Miller said: "First was A. M. Grimes who at the 3rd Quarterly Conference in May, 1895, was licensed to preach." The record of his 25 years is best read in the table of figures he kept. On its completion he wrote: "I am sorry in my heart that results are so meager. How humiliating these meager results! But for all this I must now go into judgment. The Blood! The Blood! Is all my plea! Enough to



ORIGINAL

No. 7 TEACHER'S CERTIFICATE. Grade No. One

GOOD FOR 4 YEARS

THIS IS TO CERTIFY, That A. M. Grimes is a person of good moral character, competent to teach and govern a common school, and has passed an examination in the following branches with the annexed results:

ORTHOGRAPHY	90	U. S. HISTORY	95	TOTAL PERCENTAGES	1120
READING	90	GEOGRAPHY	100	AVERAGE PER CENT	93 1/3
PENMANSHIP	90	BOOK KEEPING	90	LOWEST PER CENT. IN ANY ONE BRANCH	80
ARITHMETIC	95	CIVIL GOVERNMENT	80		
ENGLISH GRAMMAR	95	THEORY AND ART OF TEACHING	100		
PHYSIOLOGY AND HYGIENE, Etc.	100				
GENERAL HISTORY	95				

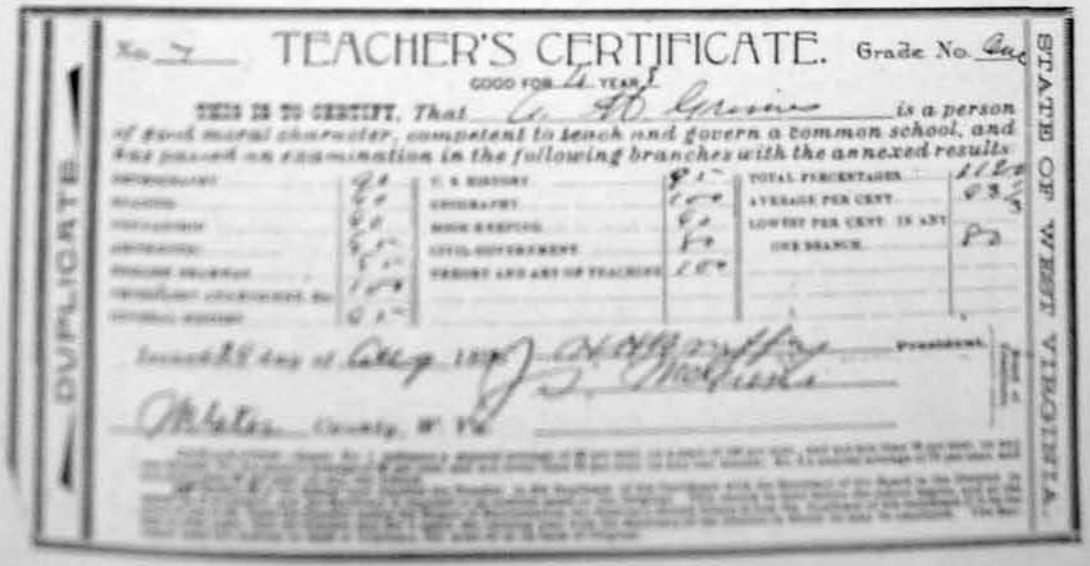
Issued 28 day of Aug 1895 J. H. H. Bruffey President.

J. S. McGuire

Webster County, W. Va.

Board of Examiners.

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA.



DUPLICATE

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PENMANSHIP	90	BOOK KEEPING	90	LOWEST PER CENT. IN ANY ONE BRANCH	80
ARITHMETIC	95	CIVIL GOVERNMENT	80		
ENGLISH GRAMMAR	95	THEORY AND ART OF TEACHING	100		
PHYSIOLOGY AND HYGIENE, Etc.	100				
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Name of Charge	Professed or Reclaimed	Conversion	United with the Church	Baptized	Marriages	Fee	Funerals		Salary
		Visits				$ ¢	Sermons		$
1895-6 Barbour Cir.	130	204	6				128	1	35.
1896-7 Egypt Cir.	254	700	15	3			400	2	91.
1898-1901 Reid "	100	900	68	55	2	3.50	450	6	524.
1901-1903 Stincard "	175	1186	70	78	8	17.00	505	28	803.
1903-1904 Procter "	30	430	24	23	1	5.00	213	5	165.
1904-1905 Rosby "	20	251	19	15	1	2.00	144	3	439.
1905-1908 Unionstown "	160	909	124	83	21	84.00	522	32	1248.
1908-1910 Pleasant Valley	75	669	71	54	5	16.25	408	21	1200.
1910-1911 Winifrede "	25	595	12	15	2	4.00	152	8	431.
1911-1912 Handley "	10	500	9	1	2	8.50	140	5	255
1912-1914 Henderson "	100	374	77	35	5	10.00	178	14	836.
1914-1915 Milton-B-Ville "		481	3	1	0	0.00	116	1	287.
1915-1918 Tilsey "	15	926	14	12	0	0.00	424	5	897.
1918-1919 Friendly "	20	96	13	8	2	6.00	100	4	502.
1919-1920 Cottageville "	75	274	51	23	4	22.00	250	18	800.
Grand Totals	865	8491	576	406	53	178.25	4130	153	8566.

The above figures show some results of 25 years spent in the ministry from 1895 to 1920 - I am sorry in my heart that the results are so meager. How humiliating these meager results! This enough to humble a man throughout all eternity. Friday, Oct. 14-1921-10:30 P.M. But for all this I must now go into Judgement. Stone City, Tyler Co., W.Va. A.M.G. The Blood! The Blood! Is all my plea! —

humble a man throughout all eternity. Friday, October 14, 1921, Home City, Tyler County, West Virginia."

In retirement of more than 40 years, Grimes would in some capacity serve the ministry. He had not finished his course, he would not say that he had fought a good fight, but he had kept the faith. In arithmetic of religion "meager results" always had a place. When the Lord was on earth He spoke of highways and hedges, of one lost sheep, and of possible attainment when "two or three" of his followers were gathered together. Certainly, no Methodist Conference would contend that the best ministerial service is always performed in the largest churches.

The circuit rider, like the country doctor, was devoted to his horse, almost to companionship. Grimes, equipped with saddlebags and leggings, was photographed on "Mat," his favorite mount, April 17, 1903. He wrote: " 'Mat' and I starting from Fayetteville to make our appointments at Cirtsville and Bethel, a distance of 20 to 25 miles. Oh, the mud to Oak Hill." He noted "the beautiful, sunshiny morning".*

In 1911, Grimes and Miss America M. Miller were married and they became parents of children, Abraham, Sarah and Mary. Mary married Regis D. Connell, and it was with Connells in Fairmont that Grimes made his home after the death of his wife.

On June 8, 1962, the annual Methodist Conference was in session at Buckhannon. "The Informant," official publication, reported:

> A highlight of each annual conference session is the Retired Ministers Banquet and the selection of a retired minister to be honored by possession of the Conference Cane. The cane has been passed among retired ministers since 1897. It usually is awarded to the oldest living minister or the minister with the greatest number of years of service.
>
> The Rev. Addison M. Grimes, present cane-holder, is past 99 years of age. He enjoys good health and plans to go right on past the century mark. In the acceptance speech, when presented the cane, Brother Grimes spoke with vigor and enthusiasm. It was not difficult at all to see across the years and visualize circuit riders of another era as they evangelized the frontier settlements. Of such stock was Methodism born!

When Grimes became a centenarian the Fairmont press hailed him as the oldest citizen, and family and friends celebrated the occasion. He told a news reporter, "I am proud of the cane but, of course, I don't need it." He added a bit of philosophy: "Always be

busy and profitably employed. Idleness is the devil's workshop. If you are unhappy or down in the dumps, just do something nice and you will feel a whole lot better."

Under date of July 4, 1963, Grimes wrote: "My 100th birthday. Preached at Diamond Street Church to a full house (252). 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6).' Never had finer freedom and liberty in speech. To God be all the glory." In July, Grimes delivered four sermons.

During the centennial year of West Virginia, 1963, a special program was held at Fairview Methodist Church at which the history of the institution was reviewed. Grimes participated in the program. A. F. Gregory reported: "More than 100 people were on the ground, made up of both present and former residents of the community, and ranging in age from 100 to mere babes in arms." "The Webster Echo" on September 25, 1963, carried a photo of charter members present. They were Grimes, Mrs. Nancy H. Hamrick and Calvin H. Brady. Grimes wrote: "It was a great experience to be present at homecoming, not soon to be forgotten."

On June 8, 1964, he sent Methodist Conference a message: "I appreciate the great honor of having the cane two years and gladly return it for someone else to enjoy." He died June 15, or 19 days before his 101 birthday.

[illegible]